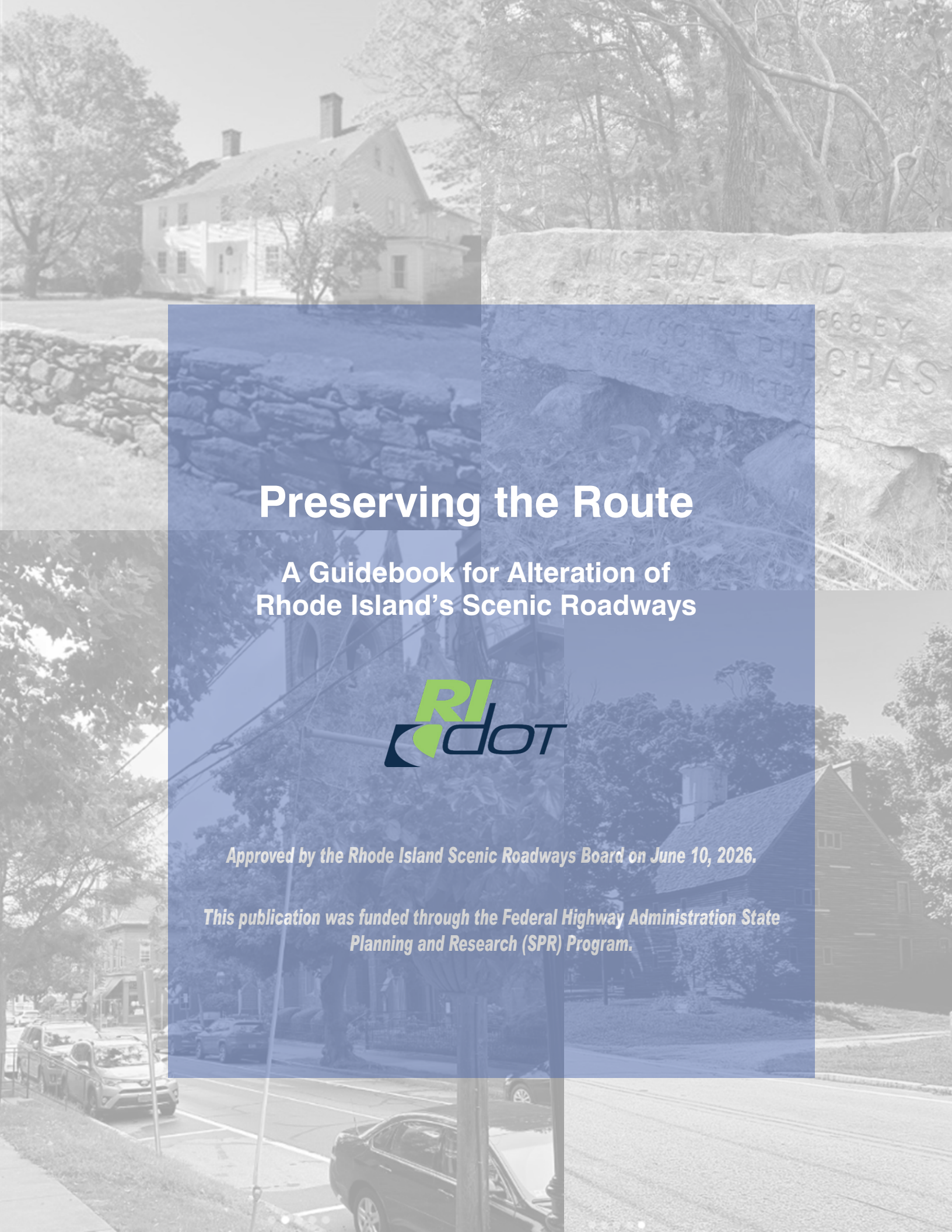




Preserving the Route

A Guidebook for Alteration of Rhode Island's Scenic Roadways



Approved by the Rhode Island Scenic Roadways Board on June 10, 2026.

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INTRODUCTION

Preserving the Route: A Guidebook for Rhode Island's Scenic Roadways (The Guidebook) was developed to support the planning and execution of project development and permits within the right-of-way (ROW) of a Scenic Roadway. The Guidebook is a tool for the Scenic Roadways Board (SRB) and for the design development teams (engineers, landscape architects, planners and other design professionals). The goal is to have specific, clear, and objective guidelines and recommendations applicable to all projects proposed by the State, local agencies, utility companies, developers or private landowners.

The Guidebook is organized in the following manner to provide guidance to the reader.

Section 1 includes an overview of Rhode Island's scenic roadways and refers to the Stewardship Plans.

Section 2 provides a detailed guide to the submission process for various RIDOT or municipality projects, and projects that require a physical alteration or utility permit.

Section 3 recommends methods, products and materials to avoid, minimize, mitigate, or compensate for any potential negative impacts to the visual or intrinsic qualities.

The Scenic Roadways Board (SRB) was created by Rhode Island General Law 24-15-10, within the executive department, consisting of nine (9) Senate confirmed members, as follows:

- Director of the RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT) or their designee,
- Director of the RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) or their designee,
- Chair of the RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) and,
- Six members appointed by the governor:
 - One member recommended by Grow Smart Rhode Island,
 - One member recommended by the Rhode Island Builders Association, and
 - Four (4) members from the general public.

The SRB has the power and duty of reviewing municipal, state or federally funded or assisted projects for the improvement, construction, or alteration of scenic roadways. The SRB also reviews permit applications for construction, repair, maintenance, or alteration to scenic roadways. The reviews are to evaluate the potential for adverse effects upon scenic resources or characteristics that qualified the roadway to be designated as scenic.

SRB jurisdiction is generally limited to the roadway right-of-way but may include considerations of viewsheds or views from the road. The SRB has no authority regarding the

land use or zoning of adjacent private or public property. Municipalities determine land use and zoning restrictions.

The SRB's enabling legislation is supported by two documents:

- *Rules of the Rhode Island Scenic Roadway Board* (SRB) are outlined in [290-RICR-50-00-1](#) as amended, effective date July 2, 2018
- [SRB by-laws](#) were adopted on April 8, 2020, to direct RIDOT staff to support the board within the constraints of available resources

The SRB applies the rules and by-laws noted above to guide its review of any proposed new scenic roadway or proposed alterations on any of the State's designated scenic roads. In general, the SRB's process involves:

- Documentation of the existing visual character.
- Analysis of the potential impact on the established visual character, and
- Identification of mitigation and enhancement measures for any impacts identified.

This Guidebook includes information on the review process and design considerations for work along scenic roadways. In general, the following are important to ensuring an efficient and successful review process:

- **Early coordination with the SRB.**
- **Design that respects the scale and context of the roadway.**

1.0 SCENIC ROADWAYS OVERVIEW

Nine road segments in Rhode Island are designated as Scenic Roadways. Except for the Paradise Loop in Middletown, all Scenic Roadways are state-maintained roadways. As part of the process of requesting designation as a Scenic Roadway, municipalities prepared a Stewardship Plan. These plans include important information about the visual attributes of that roadway and must be consulted as part of the SRB review process. Many of the Stewardship Plans separate the Scenic Roadway into segments, which can assist the applicant in understanding the baseline visual conditions. The nine scenic roadways in Rhode Island include the following, which are listed in Figure 1-1, on the following page. The full names of the Scenic Roadways are used in Section 1 but are abbreviated as noted in other parts of the Guidebook.

- Shannock Road in Charlestown and Richmond
- Ministerial Road in South Kingstown
- Veterans Memorial Parkway in East Providence
- Paradise Avenue and Associated Roads (the Paradise Loop) in Middletown
- Breakneck Hill Road/Great Road in Lincoln
- Ten Rod Road/Victory Highway (Route 102) in Exeter (Ten Rod Road/Victory Highway)
- Hope Street and Ferry Road (Route 114) and High Street in Bristol (Hope Street)
- Route 1 in Charlestown
- Route 1 in South Kingstown

The following pages explain the typologies developed to describe these roadways, followed by a summary of each Scenic Roadway. Using the [Inventory of Rhode Island Roadways with Scenic Character](#) from 1996, the SRB recognizes four general typologies to help describe the visual characteristics of the Scenic Roadways. These include Urban and Town Center, Agrarian, Inland Woodland, and Coastal. Most of the Scenic Roadways fit within one typology, but there are some that encompass more than one.

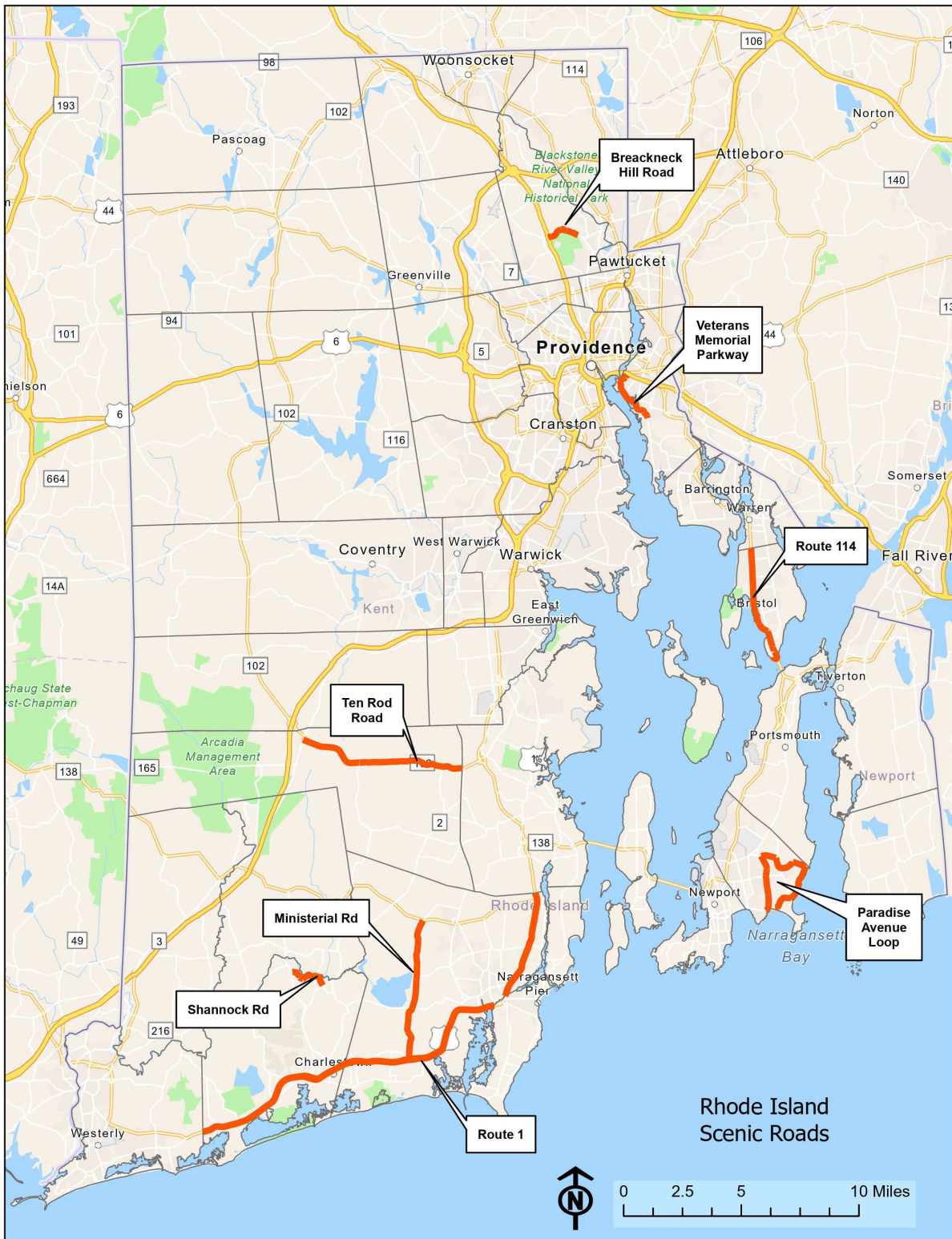


Figure 1-1. Scenic Roadways in Rhode Island Source: RIDOT

SCENIC ROADWAY TYPOLOGIES



Urban and Town Center

Urban and Town Center roadway visual characteristics include buildings and other historic features. These roadways have narrow streets with design speeds typically under 30 miles per hour (mph) and are usually curbed with on-street parking. Sidewalks are typical, as is infrastructure like traffic signals, signage, etc.



Agrarian

Agrarian roadways have open views of natural and agricultural landscapes.



Inland Woodland

Inland Woodland roadways have limited open views. Their visual character is defined by the surrounding forest and other natural features.



Coastal

Coastal roadways have open views of the coastal shoreline.

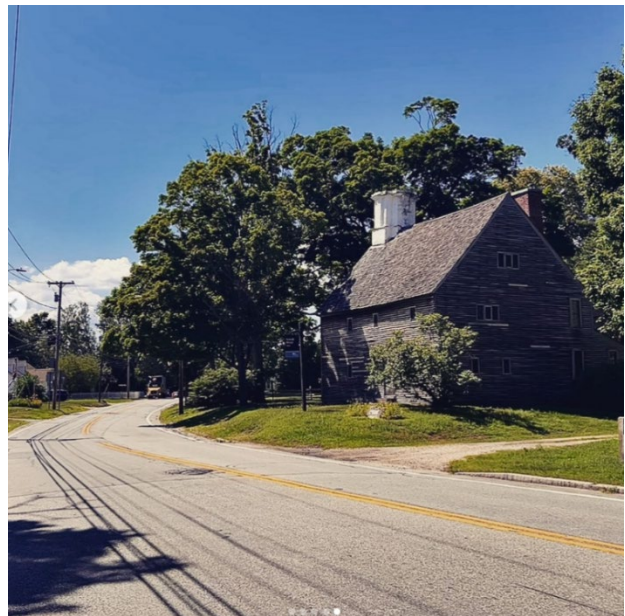


Figure 1-2. An example of agrarian typology, Great Road/Breakneck Hill Road, Lincoln RI. Source: RIDOT

These typologies provide a shorthand description of the dominant visual elements that define a roadway's scenic character.

SHANNOCK ROAD



City/Town: Charlestown and Richmond

Length: 1.7 Miles

Designated: January 1991

Limits: From the intersection with Route 2, westerly to the intersection of Route 112, encompassing both Charlestown and Richmond.

Stewardship Plan: [Shannock Road Stewardship Plan](#)

Midway along Shannock Road is the historic Shannock Village, a small but well-preserved rural textile mill village.

Throughout the nineteenth century, small mills were constructed on the waterways of Southern Rhode Island. Villages to house workers grew around these mills. Shannock Village is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



Figure 1-3. Start of Shannock Road. Source: Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect

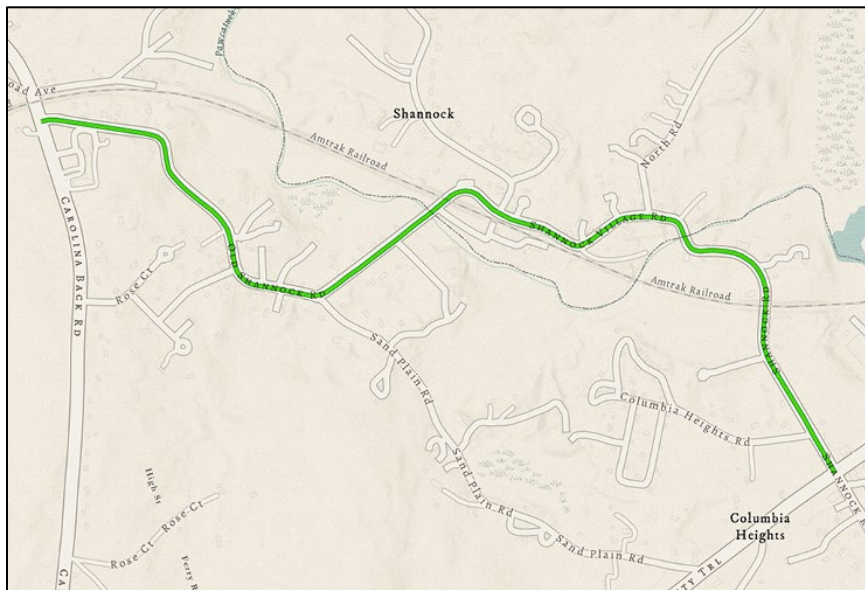


Figure 1-4. Shannock Road in Charlestown and Richmond, RI. Source: RIDEM

SHANNOCK ROAD



Figure 1-5. View of historic mill ruins along Shannock Road. *Source: Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect*



Figure 1-6. Evergreen-lined drive along Shannock Road. *Source: Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect*



MINISTERIAL ROAD

City/Town: South Kingstown

Length: 6 miles

Designated: September 1991

Limits: Route 1 to Route 138

Stewardship Plan: [Ministerial Road Stewardship Plan](#)



Figure 1-7. Ministerial Road, South Kingstown, RI.
Source: RIDOT



Figure 1-8. Scenic Ministerial Road in South Kingstown, RI.
Source: RIDEM

MINISTERIAL ROAD



Ministerial Road passes through dense stands of upland forest and is well known for the extensive areas of mountain laurel and rhododendron, which grow underneath the upland forest canopy. The road passes through a rolling landscape characterized by glacial kettle holes and moraines, several small brooks, wetlands, and Larkin Pond. Stone walls underscore the fact that this area was once largely farmland and pasture.

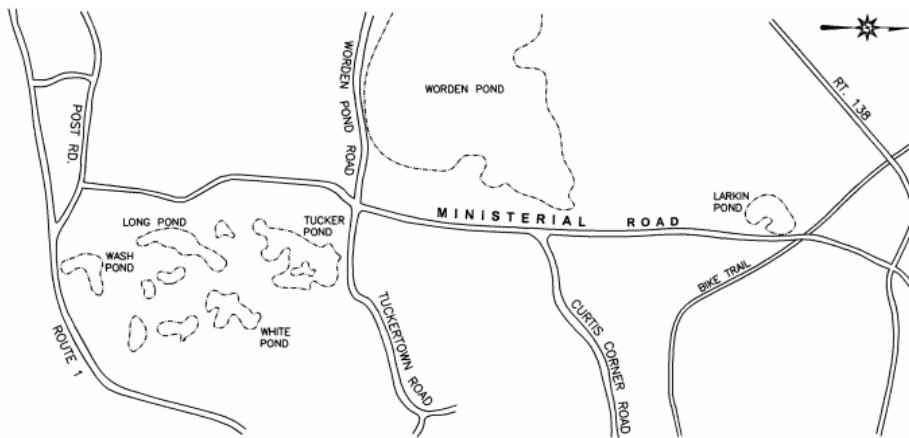


Figure 1-9. Ministerial Road, South Kingston, RI. Source: RIDEM

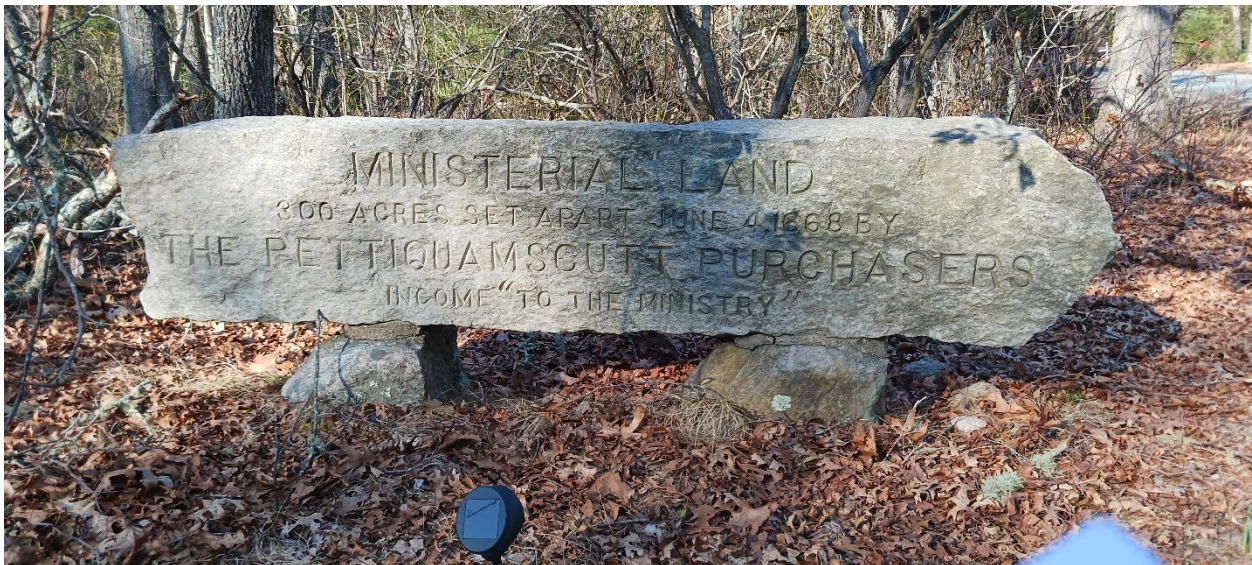


Figure 1-10. Granite marker at Ministerial Road, South Kingston, RI. Source: Michael De Luca

VETERANS MEMORIAL PARKWAY



City/Town: East Providence

Length: 2.5 miles

Designated: November 1991

Limits: From Second Street south to Pawtucket Avenue.

Stewardship Plan: [Veterans Memorial Parkway Stewardship Plan](#)

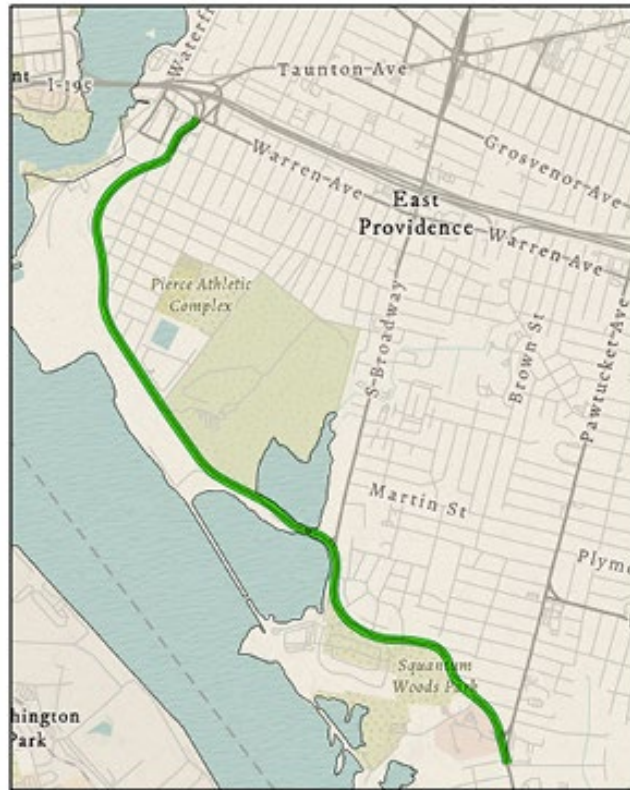


Figure 1-11. Veterans Memorial Parkway, East Providence, RI. Source: RIDEM

The Veterans Memorial Parkway runs along the Providence with impressive vistas of the downtown Providence skyline. It is lined with mature maple, oak, black pine and sycamore trees, and passes the locally notable landmarks of Squantum Woods, Watchemoket Cove and Fort Hill Overlook. The Parkway has pastoral charm with the nearby urban landscape masked by the adjacent heavily wooded areas of both public and private land.

Constructed between 1910 and 1920, Veterans Memorial Parkway is an example of the Parkway movement in the early 20th century. It is significant for its association with the Greater Metropolitan Park Plan for Providence and for its design by the nationally prominent Olmsted firm. The Parkway has been recommended as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

VETERANS MEMORIAL PARKWAY



Figure 1-12. Veterans Memorial Parkway, with the East Bay Bike Path to the right, East Providence, RI. Source: *Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect*



Figure 1-13. Bird's eye view looking east on Veterans Memorial Parkway, with bridge over Watchemoket Cove, East Providence, RI. Source: *Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect*

PARADISE AVENUE AND ASSOCIATED ROADS (THE PARADISE LOOP)



City/Town: Middletown

Length: 7.25 miles

Designated: May 1993

Limits: Paradise Avenue, Hanging Rock Road, Indian Avenue, Peckham Avenue, Wapping Road, Mitchell's Lane, Wyatt Road and Berkeley Avenue.

Stewardship Plan: [Paradise Loop Stewardship Plan](#)



Figure 1-14. Intersection between Paradise Avenue and Green End Avenue in Middletown, RI. Source: Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect



Figure 1-15. Approaching the intersection where Hanging Rock Road becomes Indian Avenue in Middletown, RI. Source: Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect

Paradise Loop includes many locally significant historic features, both manmade and natural. The area is characterized by historic homes of varying types and periods, including colonial, Victorian, Greek Revival, and other 19th and 20th century architectural styles.

The roads feature bordering trees of exceptional quality in terms of ages, and specimens with views of natural landmarks such as Paradise Rock and Hanging Rock. Vistas of the surrounding coastline highlight the Atlantic Ocean, Sakonnet River, Second and Third Beaches, and the USFWS Sachuest Point Wildlife Refuge and Norman Bird Sanctuary.

PARADISE AVENUE AND ASSOCIATED ROADS (THE PARADISE LOOP)



Figure 1-16. Scenic view towards the coast and Hanging Rock along Paradise Avenue in Middletown, RI. Source: *Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect*



Figure 1-17. Driving along Gardiner Pond on Hanging Rock Road in Middletown, RI. Source: *Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect*

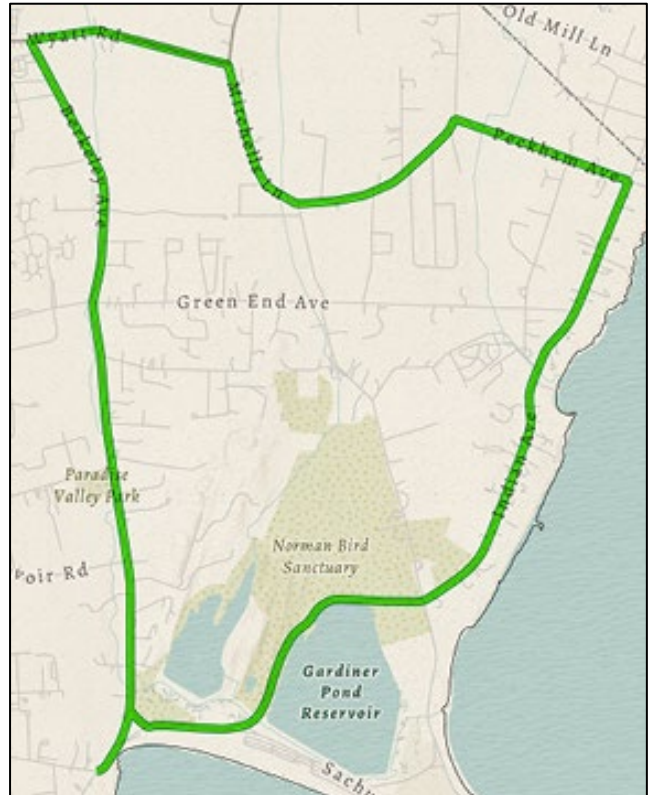


Figure 1-18. Paradise Loop, Middletown, RI. Source: *RIDEM*

BREAKNECK HILL ROAD / GREAT ROAD



City/Town: Lincoln

Length: 1.4 miles

Designated: June 1993

Limits: From the Route 146 exit onto Breakneck Hill Road to the intersection of Great Road and then following Great Road to the intersection with Manchester Print Works Road.

Stewardship Plan: [Breakneck Hill Road Stewardship Plan](#)



Figure 1-19. Parking lot off Great Road for Historic Chase Farm Park, Lincoln, RI. Source: Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect

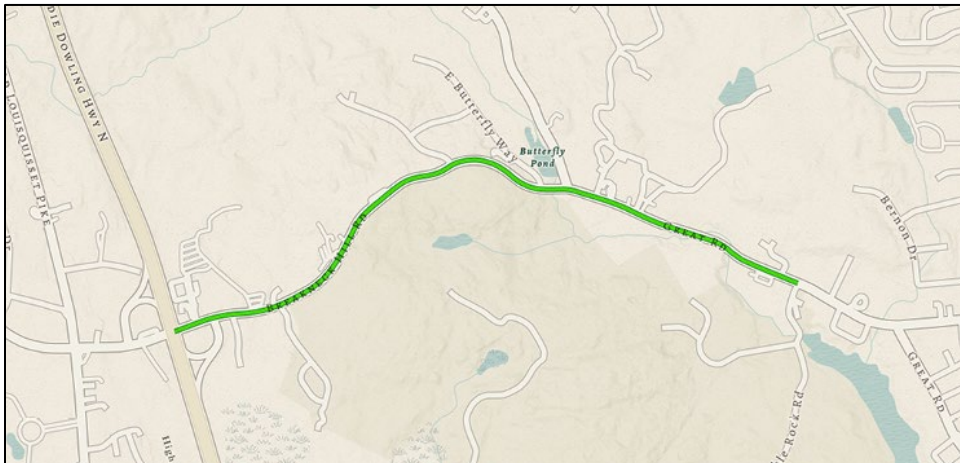


Figure 1-20. Breakneck Hill Road/Great Road, Lincoln, RI. Source: RIDEM

Breakneck Hill Road/Great Road is known for vistas across the Moshassuck River Valley. It traverses open space and rolling farmlands. It is one of the earliest colonial roads, and portions of it are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Great Road Historic District. Over 150 acres of farmland lie at the corner of Great Road and Breakneck Hill Road.

BREAKNECK HILL ROAD / GREAT ROAD



Figure 1-21. View of historic farm and silos from Great Road in Lincoln, RI.
Source: Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect



Figure 1-22. Great Road, Lincoln, RI is part of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. *Source: RIDOT*

TEN ROD ROAD / VICTORY HIGHWAY (ROUTE 102)



City/Town: Exeter

Length: 7.3 miles

Designated: September 1993

Limits: Between Route 2 and Route 3

Stewardship Plan: [Ten Rod Road/Victory Highway \(Route 102\) Stewardship Plan](#)



Figure 1-23. Approaching the start of Route 102, Exeter, RI.
Source: Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect

Route 102 traverses Exeter's rolling topography, with elongated hills that run north to south, separated by narrow valleys. Most of the highway follows the 18th century Ten Rod Road and is still bounded by significant sections of the original stone walls. Historic structures and sites, including two historic districts are located along this roadway.

Known as "Exeter's Main Street," Route 102 was once used to carry goods and livestock to a market at the colonial seaport of Wickford. The highway crosses five valleys containing the streams that constitute the headwaters of the Queen's River watershed .

TEN ROD ROAD / VICTORY HIGHWAY (ROUTE 102)



Figure 1-24. Open scenic view driving downhill on Route 102, Exeter, RI.
Source: Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect

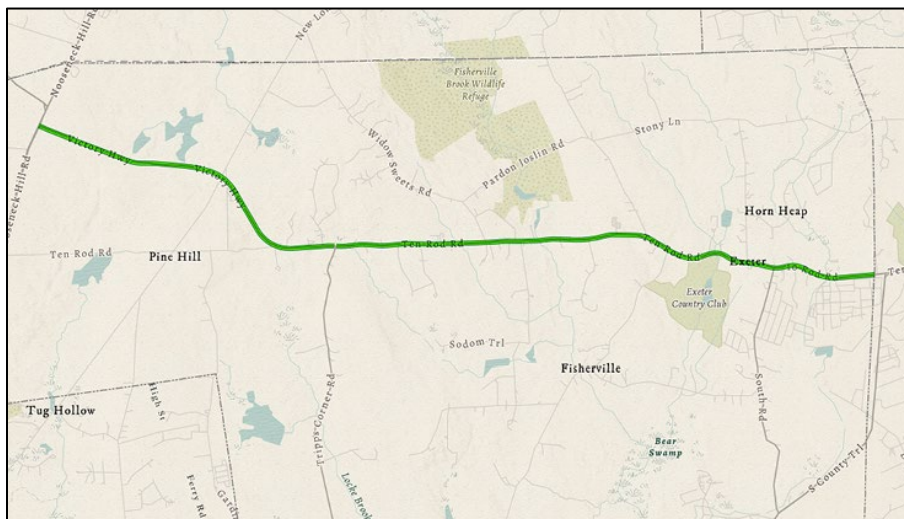


Figure 1-25. Ten Rod Road/Victory Highway, Exeter, RI. Source: RIDEM

HOPE STREET / FERRY ROAD (ROUTE 114) AND HIGH STREET



City/Town: Bristol

Length: 5 miles

Designated: August 2000

Limits: Route 114 includes Hope Street and Ferry Road from the Warren Townline, south to the Mount Hope Bridge. Designated scenic roads also include High Street via Washington Street, both local roads.

Stewardship Plan: [Hope Street and Ferry Road and High Street Stewardship Plan](#)

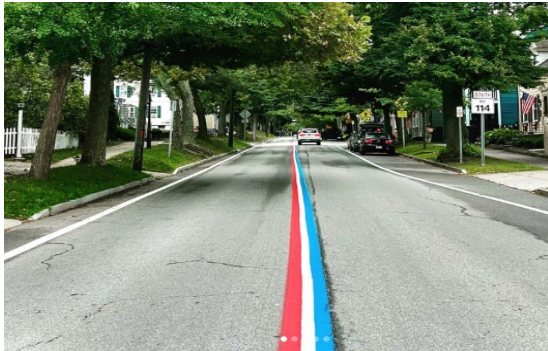


Figure 1-26. The start of Route 114 as a tree-lined street in Bristol, RI. Source: RIDOT



Figure 1-27. Hope Street / Ferry Road (Route 114) and High Street in Bristol, RI. Source: RIDEM

Hope Street includes historic sites, historic landmarks, landscapes, buildings, trees, and scenic viewsheds. A canopy of mature trees lines nearly the entire length. Motorists traveling through Bristol pass through a rare example of a 17th century planned "grid" community.

Route 114 is lined with many historic homes and buildings, and many other historic sites exist along this route, such as Colt State Park and Blithewold Manor Gardens and Arboretum. As one travels through the historic district, every side street culminates in a beautiful view of Bristol Harbor and Poppasquash Point.

HOPE STREET / FERRY ROAD (ROUTE 114) AND HIGH STREET



Figure 1-28.
Scenic views
along Route
114, Bristol, RI.
*Source: Elena
Pascarella,
Landscape
Architect*



Figure 1-29.
Historic
downtown of
Bristol as seen
along Route
114, Bristol, RI.
*Source: Elena
Pascarella,
Landscape
Architect*

ROUTE 1 / CHARLESTOWN



City/Town: Charlestown

Length: 7 Miles

Designated: August 2002

Limits: From the South Kingstown town line to the Westerly town line.

Stewardship Plan: [Route 1 Stewardship Plan](#)

Route 1 is also called Post Road in this section of Charlestown



Figure 1-30. View of birch trees and large oak trees along Route 1 in Charlestown, RI.

Source: Elena Pascarella, Landscape Architect

Route 1, or Post Road, has wonderful views that create an attractive traveling experience across southern Rhode Island. The road possesses outstanding natural, historical, and cultural characteristics, recreational opportunities, and other significant visual characteristics.

There are also important natural resources along Post Road. On the northerly side, which is the edge of the glacial Charlestown Moraine, there is thick and beautiful foliage consisting of a variety of species of trees. The median strip, which is very wide for over half of the road, has landscaping that blocks the view of oncoming traffic in many areas. On the southerly side, the vegetation is lower, offering the driver an occasional glimpse of South County's salt ponds.

In addition to the scenic natural beauty, there are interesting historical and cultural resources along the road dating back as far as the 17th century. These include the 1667 Stanton Inn, the Wilcox Tavern, and the Joseph Stanton House and monument.

ROUTE 1 / CHARLESTOWN



Figure 1-31. Route 1 in Charlestown, RI. Source: RIDOT

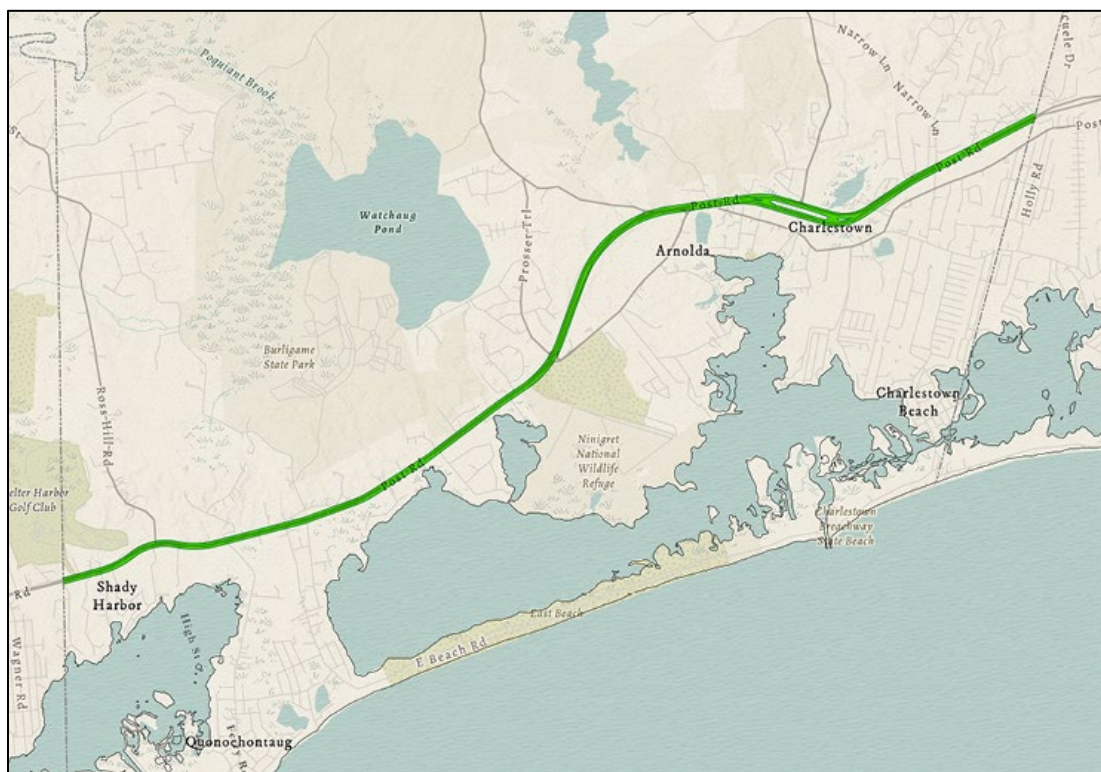


Figure 1-32. Scenic Route 1 in Charlestown, RI. Source: RIDEM

ROUTE 1 / SOUTH KINGSTOWN



City/Town: South Kingstown

Length: 12.35 miles

Designated: May 2018

Limits: From the Route 138/Bridgetown Road intersection south to Shannock Road. ½-mile portion of the roadway (approximately in the middle) passes through the town of Narragansett and is excluded from the designation.

Stewardship Plan: [Oliver Hazard Perry Highway \(Route 1\) Stewardship Plan](#)

This section of Route 1 is also called the Oliver Hazard Perry Highway.



Figure 1-33. Views of the Hannah Robinson Tower at the intersection of Route 1 and Route 138, South Kingstown, RI. *Source: Visit Rhode Island*

Route 1 in South Kingstown follows the historic Post Road. Beginning as a web of Indian trails used for centuries by native inhabitants, the road was later developed in the colonial era to become an important route for carrying mail and newspapers. Today, the natural views are noteworthy. The vegetation alongside the road is diverse with upland deciduous, coniferous and mixed forests, scrub shrub communities and herbaceous species. On clear days, Aquidneck Island and the City of Newport can be seen across Narragansett Bay.

The rich agrarian history in the area is exhibited by the approximate four miles of stone walls running parallel to the road and the early settlements of the Narragansett Indians throughout the area. The roadway features historic places like Willow Dell, Whaley Farm, Rocky Meadows Farm, Jeremiah Robinson House ("Endaler"), Shadblow Farm, and the Observation Tower and Hannah Robinson Rock at the intersection of Route 138.

ROUTE 1 / SOUTH KINGSTOWN

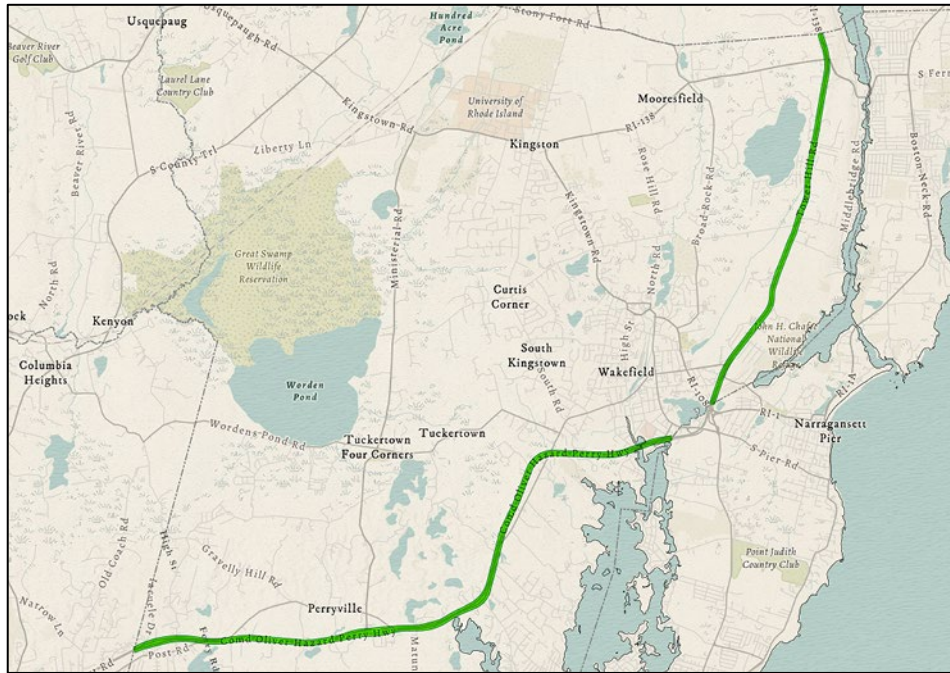


Figure 1-34. Scenic Route 1 in South Kingstown, RI. Source: RIDEM



Figure 1-35. Route 1 in South Kingstown, RI. Source: RIDOT

2.0 APPLICATION PROCEDURES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION, REPAIR, OR ALTERATION OF SCENIC ROADWAYS

Early communication and coordination with the Scenic Roadways Board (SRB) will provide sufficient opportunity for review, comment, and resolution. The SRB meets routinely to review submissions. When reviewing a project, the SRB first determines if the proposed work has the potential to cause a negative impact on the designated roadway's scenic character. If no adverse effect on scenic resources is anticipated, a project may be approved. If the Board does identify a potential adverse effect, a resolution is sought to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the undesirable outcome. The SRB may require the applicant to attend a Board meeting for presentation and discussion.

This section describes the review process, including the types of projects subject to SRB review, the categories of review, the review procedures, and review considerations. The process varies slightly, depending on the applicant, project type and specific roadway. Designated Scenic Roadways are owned and maintained either by the State (through the RI Department of Transportation) or by the municipality in which the road is located.

Project Types

All projects reviewed by the SRB are referred internally by RIDOT staff following application under one of three project types:

1. Capital Project
2. Physical Alteration Permit
3. Utility Permit

Capital Projects are large complex construction projects which may be designed and/or constructed in phases. These projects may include construction and maintenance of roadways and bridges, and infrastructure improvements to utilities, sidewalks and traffic measures.

A Physical Alteration Permit (PAP) is required to alter the ROW for:

- Curbs and Curb cuts,
- Sidewalks,
- Highway/ Bridge Access,
- Stormwater Disposal,
- Construction Within the State Highway Right-of-Way,
- Traffic Signals, and
- Signage

Utility Permit (UP) is required to place utilities within or upon RIDOT right-of-way. Some examples of utilities are above and underground electric power transmission, cellular communication towers, fiber optic lines, pole lines, sewers, water, or gas mains, renewable energy generation (i.e., solar photovoltaic cells, wind turbines, etc.), or other similar facilities, including fire or police signal systems or street lighting systems. Because many of these projects propose maintenance activities, it is often not necessary to have a presentation at a Board meeting. In unique situations, however, a meeting or presentation may be requested.

Review Procedures

The Scenic Roadway Board has authority to review any proposed alteration to a designated Scenic Road. This includes proposals affecting grade changes, alteration of vegetation, curb cuts and other accesses or entrances leading into the right of way of the scenic roadway, as well as roadway construction or repair. Per State regulation ([290-RICR-50-00-1](#)), any such work shall require review by the Board. Figure 2-1 describes the review process for different project types and different categories of review.

Private parties who seek permission to alter any element of a scenic roadway must first consult with the roadway owner to ensure compliance with owner standards and to receive permission to advance their request to RIDOT. This consultation is encouraged early since some of the requirements for approval through the Scenic Roadway Board may vary from the owner's requirements.

The project sponsor for a capital project must inform RIDOT's SRB contact to start the review process. Upon referral of an application, the RIDOT SRB contact will inform the Board Chair. They shall review the proposal and determine whether the proposal may constitute a Minor or a Major Alteration ([290-RICR-50-00-1](#) Section 1.6 C).

The two types of permits administered by RIDOT Maintenance Division, Office of Engineering and Permitting – the Physical Alteration Permit Application (PAP) and the Utility Permit Application (UP) are processed electronically through RIDOT's e-permitting system. When work is proposed on a designated scenic roadway, the RIDOT Office of Engineering and Permitting informs RIDOT's SRB contact and forwards the application to them.

A **Minor Alteration** may include minor routine maintenance of a designated roadway. Maintenance is defined by regulation to include sweeping, crack sealing, striping, replacing signs (same location, size, characteristics), resurfacing with only insignificant topographical changes, repair of failed drainage (same location and characteristics), and minor utility repair.

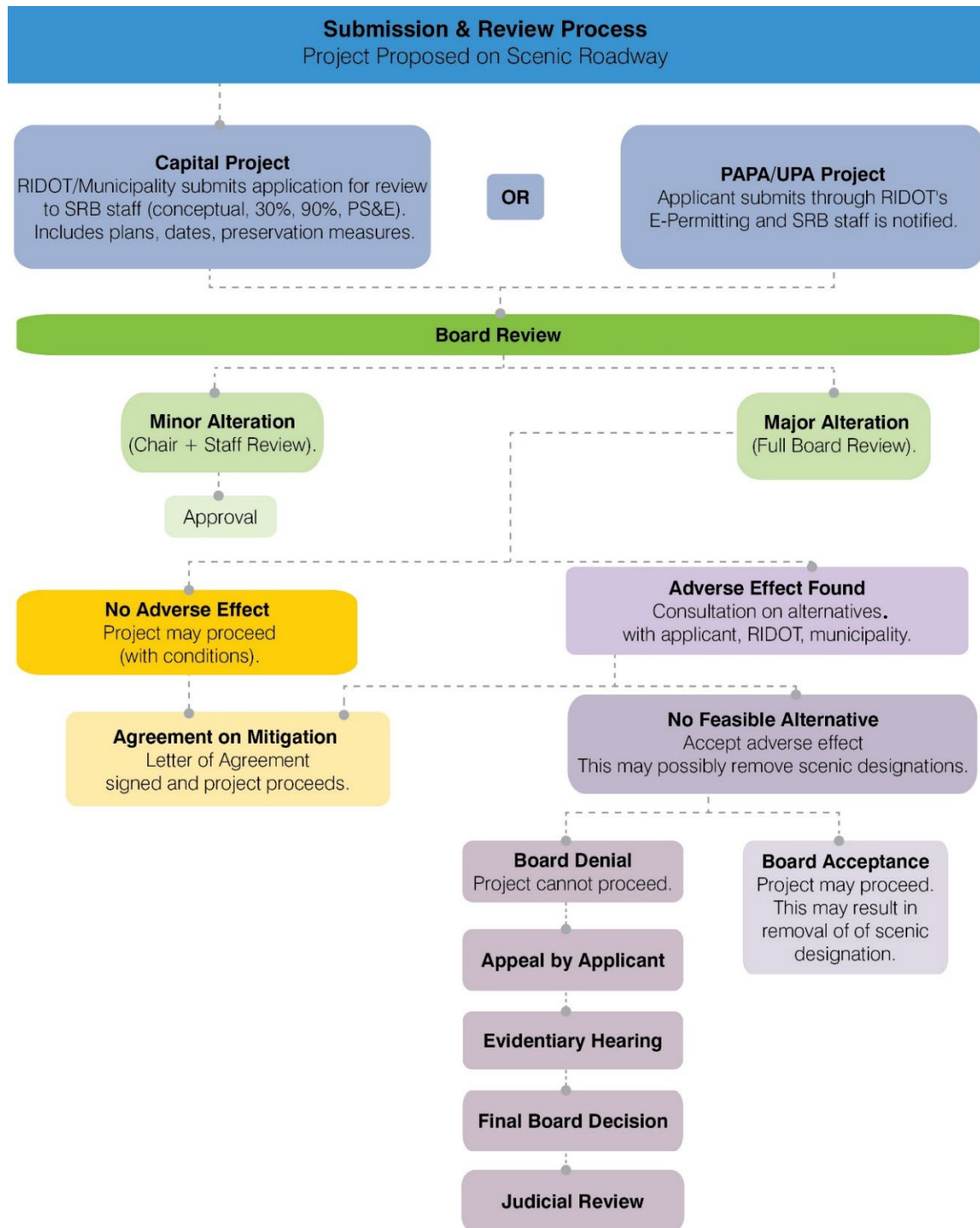


Figure 2-1. Flow chart for SRB review. Source: RIDOT

Determination by Chair of Minor Alteration

If the Chair determines the proposal to be a Minor Alteration with no potential for major impacts, the Chair may, at his/her discretion, refer the proposal to the Board's technical staff for a recommendation. The Chair may then choose to approve the work based on technical staff recommendations. Notice to be provided to the full Board at their next regular meeting.

Determination by Chair of Major Alteration

If the Chair determines the proposal may be a Major Alteration to a scenic roadway, including construction, repair or alteration, the applicant shall submit application materials.

Prior to development of design plans, the applicant shall provide conceptual design plans and other relevant material, for the Board's review.

To obtain final approval to perform construction, repair or alteration on a scenic roadway, the following materials shall be provided to the Board at the 30% and 90% design levels, including all information as to the way the project will affect the scenic roadway:

- Public comment described in [290-RICR-50-00-1](#) Section 1.6 B 3,
- All items identified in [290-RICR-50-00-1](#) Section 1.6 C 3, a through e.

Board Review

If an application is placed on the agenda for consideration at a Board meeting, the applicant or their representative will be invited to attend the meeting for the purpose of presenting their application. At the completion of the presentation the Board can decide that additional time is needed, make a "Determination of No Adverse Effect" or make a "Determination of Adverse Effect". Additional meetings at each design stage may be required to discuss changes and resolutions.

- If approved by Board, no changes relative to SRB considerations shall be permitted.
- If additional time is required for the Board's review, the Board shall notify the applicant.

Determination of No Adverse Effect

If the Board finds that the project will not have an adverse effect on the features or characteristics of the scenic roadway, it shall document such finding(s) and notify the applicant. The Board may stipulate changes to the project or conditions required to avoid potential adverse effects.

Determination of Adverse Effect

If the Board finds that the project will have an adverse effect on the features or characteristics of the scenic roadway, it shall notify the applicant as well as the Director of

RIDOT and/or the municipality which owns the roadway, and others who have requested in writing that they be notified of such a determination.

The Board may consult with the applicant and RIDOT or the municipality regarding alternatives which would avoid, minimize or mitigate the adverse effects of the project and preserve the scenic resources of the roadway. The Board may invite other parties to participate in said consultation.

Options:

If the Board finds that the project will have an adverse effect on the features or characteristics of the scenic roadway, it may work to negotiate an agreement to avoid, minimize or mitigate those impacts, or it may accept the adverse effect.

1. Agreement to avoid, minimize, mitigate adverse impacts: After review of the alternatives identified above, the Board and applicant and roadway owner (RIDOT or the municipality) may agree that there is a prudent and feasible alternative that avoids, minimizes or mitigates the adverse effect of a project. If an agreement can be reached, the parties shall sign an agreement describing such alternative(s) with the measures to eliminate, minimize or mitigate the adverse effect of the project, and the project may proceed.
2. After reviewing the alternatives identified above, the Board and applicant and roadway owner (RIDOT or municipality) may determine that in the interest of public safety there are no prudent or feasible alternatives to avoid, minimize or mitigate the adverse effect of a project. Upon such decision, the Board may either prepare a written report of Acceptance of the Adverse Effect, or the Board may accept an application from the RIDOT or municipality for reduction or withdrawal of the limits of the scenic designation.

If the Board decides to withhold approval, it will notify the applicant, RIDOT and/or the municipality in writing and the project shall not proceed.

Appeals from Board Decision

If the Board does not approve the application, the applicant may request an evidentiary hearing with the SRB within 20 days of the date of the written decision. If that hearing does not result in an approval, the applicant may request a judicial review.

Meetings

Major applications will require at least two meetings with the Scenic Roadways Board, at 30% and 90% design levels. Additionally, the Board may require submissions at each recognized stage of planning and design as applicable, Conceptual Design, 10%, 30%, 75%, 90%, and PS&E.

The Board is scheduled to meet monthly, and application materials are required to be submitted to RIDOT staff at least 3 weeks before a scheduled meeting to allow time for Chair and technical review.

Applicants must use the Stewardship Guides to identify and describe visual character.

Review Considerations

There are several ways that a project could affect the visual quality of a Scenic Roadway. Applicants should attempt to avoid impacts as much as is feasible. As indicated in [Title 290-RICR-50-00-1](#), adverse effects may include:

1. Physical destruction, damage, or alteration of all or part of the scenic roadway or its scenic resources.
2. Alteration of the character of the roadway's setting.
3. Introduction of visual, or atmospheric elements that are out of character with the roadway or alter its setting.
4. Neglect of a scenic roadway resulting in deterioration or destruction of the roadway or its scenic resources.
5. Transfer, lease, or sale of public-owned property without adequate provision for its continued preservation.

After identifying potential negative impacts, the Board will characterize the potential impacts by considering the following:

1. **Compatibility of the Impact:** Defined as the ability of the environment to absorb the proposed project because the project and the environment have compatible visual characters. The proposed project can be considered compatible or incompatible.
2. **Sensitivity to the Impact:** Defined by the ability of viewers to see and care about a project's impacts. The sensitivity to impact is based on the viewer's sensitivity to changes in the visual character of visual resources. Viewers are either sensitive or insensitive to impacts.
3. **Degree of the Impact:** Defined as either a beneficial, adverse, or neutral change to visual quality. A proposed project may benefit visual quality by either enhancing visual resources or by creating better views of those resources. Similarly, it may adversely affect visual quality by degrading visual resources or obstructing or altering desired views.

The SRB also considers temporary impacts and will work to ensure that the construction process does not impact visual resources. For example, the SRB may require protection of existing landscaping, including roots and canopy, during construction.

Mitigation Measures

There are different ways to mitigate potential adverse impacts. If avoiding impacts is not feasible, they should be minimized as much as possible. Landscaping or other compensatory measures can help to balance visual impacts by contributing to the visual quality of the Scenic Roadway in other locations within the project site.

Letter of Agreement

The SRB has the authority to approve, approve with conditions, or deny an application. If approved, the SRB will provide the applicant with a Letter of Agreement which will identify any required mitigation measures, including construction protocols, the specification of certain materials, etc.

3.0 DESIGN ELEMENTS

This section includes guidance on the various aspects of work within Scenic Roadways. The goal is always to avoid adverse effects on the visual quality of Rhode Island's Scenic Roadways. This section includes suggestions about the design, products, and methods for work in Scenic Roadways to avoid impacts, and where avoidance is not feasible, to mitigate and reduce these visual impacts. The following components are discussed:

1. Lighting
2. Signage, Utilities, and Traffic Signalization
3. Guardrails and Associated Safety Systems
4. Stone Walls, Ornamental Fences and Sidewalks
5. Stormwater Management
6. Landscaping and Vegetation
7. Access Management

Section 3 includes specific recommendations where possible. However, Rhode Island's Scenic Roadways have unique visual qualities, so this section also emphasizes the need to understand the existing viewsheds, to propose work that minimizes impacts and is consistent with the existing visual character.

Lighting

Roadway lighting should be carefully located to avoid impacts on wildlife corridors and wildlife habitats as well as impacts on the natural scenery of the roadway. The proposed type and location of light poles should balance potential impacts to the viewshed with requirements for safety.

Regulations and Other Guidance

Depending on the scale of the project, the SRB may require a photometric plan. Applicants shall identify opportunities to maintain safe lighting distribution while also maintaining scenic character. Section T02 of the [RIDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction \(as amended\)](#) outlines specifications for highway lighting that meet the requirements of FHWA and MUTCD standards.

The introduction of lighting fixtures along a Scenic Roadway will introduce a new vertical element to the landscape. The following guidelines can help to minimize visual impacts to the roadway and its environment.

Brightness: Lighting should be capable of being shuttered and directed downward to minimize glare, reduce light trespass, and reduce light pollution.

Light source: For light efficiency and to minimize maintenance, LED lights are preferable. However, these lights are not always the most appropriate light source

for scenic locations. LED bulbs are available in two main color temperatures: warm white and cool white. The lower color temperature of warm white has less impact on natural scenery.

Design of fixture: Light poles/fixtures should enhance the character of the roadway while maintaining the required safe lighting distribution levels. The SRB shall review and approve the design style and color of the proposed light poles/fixtures. In general, consistency with existing light fixtures is preferable unless existing fixtures do not support the unique characteristics of the scenic roadway.

Typical mitigation measures: The SRB may recommend the dimming or shielding of proposed LED lighting as a mitigation measure. They may also recommend that fixtures reflect the roadway context.

FHWA Roadway Lighting Resources: The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provides information and resources relating to roadway lighting with handbooks on roadway lighting, pedestrian safety lighting, and lighting at rural intersections.

- [FHWA Roadway Lighting Resources](#)
- [FHWA Safety: Lighting](#)

Context Considerations for Lighting on Scenic Roadways



Urban/Town Center

Hope Street and Ferry Road (Route 114) and High Street in Bristol (Hope Street) are located within the Bristol Historic District, which has its own design guidelines. The Olmsted brothers designed the Veterans Memorial Parkway, East Providence. Proposed lighting should be consistent with the historic character of the road. Although the Parkway is not subject to additional design guidelines, the SRB approved a lighting style in 2024, which should be used along the Parkway for consistency.



Agrarian

Scenic agrarian roadways have minimal lighting and proposals for lighting along these roadways should be limited to areas required for safety, such as intersections.



Inland Woodland

Ministerial Road in South Kingstown and sections of Ten Rod Road in Exeter lie within inland areas characterized by surrounding woodland. These roadways have topographical variations and tree canopy coverage that impact the amount of natural light along the road. Critical areas needing any lighting may include driveway entrances and roadway intersections. The proposed location and style of new

lighting should be reviewed to ensure that visual impacts are minimized to the extent feasible.



Coastal

Coastal scenic roadways may have topographical variations and tree canopy coverage that affect the amount of natural light. The placement and design of proposed lighting should be evaluated to ensure that visual impacts are reduced as much as possible.



Figure 3-1. Contextual lighting on Hope Street in Bristol, RI. *Source: RIDOT*

APPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

The style and color of the light pole should not detract from the scenic quality of the landscape. More urban scenic roadways should have light fixtures that match existing street lighting in scale, height, and pole style and color.

Pole colors should match existing, if appropriate, or be selected to minimize visual impact. Recommended colors and materials are wood, brown, and black and dark green.



Figure 3-2. Existing lighting in downtown Bristol, RI maintains the historic and scenic character of the area. *Source: Elena*



Figure 3-3. Example of appropriate ornamental lighting on Veterans Memorial Parkway, East Providence, RI. *Source: Pam Sherrill*

INAPPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

Standard highway lighting would not be appropriate for scenic roadways in Rhode Island. Tall aluminum poles with standard gooseneck fixtures detract from the scenic qualities of these roadways.

Bright stainless steel or aluminum poles are not recommended as they do not minimize visual impacts.



Figure 3-4. Breakneck Hill Road/Great Road in Lincoln, RI. *Source: Pam Sherrill*

What to submit:

The following information should be provided to the SRB to demonstrate how the proposed lighting will be consistent with the scenic character of the road.

1. A site plan that identifies the locations of the proposed lighting poles/fixtures.
2. Photographs of areas for the proposed lighting.
3. Photograph/image of proposed lighting style and color of paint, where applicable.
4. A specification or “cut sheet” and a detailed drawing of the style and height of the lighting fixture to be used. Detailed drawings shall include information on the type of light and color temperature of the fixture. Drawings should comply with RIDOT and FHWA/MASH requirements for placement of lighting along state roadways so that fixtures do not become hazards or block view corridors.
5. A photometric plan that provides locations and lighting levels for each of the proposed light fixtures, if required by the SRB.

If adverse effects to the visual character cannot be avoided, the following should be provided:

1. Proposed mitigation measures.
2. Documentation that alternatives are not technically feasible, cost prohibitive, or less desirable from a visual quality standpoint.
3. The SRB may stipulate additional mitigation measures to protect the visual character of lighting on the roadway.

Signage, Utility Poles, and Signalization

The placement of vertical elements like signage, utility poles and traffic signalization infrastructure along scenic roadways should balance motorist safety, and accessibility for effective maintenance, with the potential visual impact. The proposed design, scale, and placement of these elements can help to reduce the visual impact. Several of Rhode Island's scenic roadways are defined by their mature tree canopy. The health of these trees and significant shrubs, such as mountain laurel, are critical to their visual character, and in addition to considering design, siting and location, construction methods must include protection for these resources.

RIDOT prefers mast arms over span poles to support traffic signal heads due to their higher rigidity and ability to withstand high winds. According to [RIDOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction \(as amended\)](#), mast arms must be made of high-strength, galvanized steel designed for a basic wind speed of 130 miles per hour. Span poles are substituted when the required mast arm lengths are greater than 40 feet. Wood can be used only for span poles.

Regulations and Guidance

FHWA provides guidance regarding the installation of utilities - "[Noteworthy Practices – Roadside Tree and Utility Pole Management](#)." – which recommends a 6-foot minimum lateral offset from the edge of the road for utility poles and trees with diameters greater than four inches is recommended. The AASHTO Roadside Design Guide, 4th Edition also provides guidance to minimize visual impacts, which includes galvanizing poles and then painting or powder coating with black, dark green or dark brown.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) dictates signage design and location. FHWA has resources that guide the design, placement, and maintenance of signs. These include:

- [Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices \(MUTCD\) Standard Highway Signs \(as amended\)](#)
- [FHWA-SA-09-25: Maintenance of Signs and Sign Supports \(as amended\)](#).
- [RIDOT Traffic Design Manual](#).

Signage along scenic roads should be limited to required directional and regulatory signs that are located per MUTCD guidelines.

Context Considerations for Signs on Scenic Roadways

In general, things to consider for introducing vertical elements along a scenic roadway:

- Locate new infrastructure where they will have minimal impacts to the existing landscape, vegetation, and character of the roadway.
- Use paint colors for poles that minimize visual impacts, like black, brown, or dark green.
- Co-locate signs on existing poles, where feasible.



Urban/Town Center

Sections of Hope Street in Bristol have multiple signs and utility poles. The Town has made efforts to co-locate signage to reduce visual clutter. The proposed location of the signposts and poles must consider how installation and foundations can impact root systems of existing tree canopy.



Agrarian

Rural agrarian roadways have minimal signage. Utility lines may run overhead. Additional signage or utilities must be carefully located as they may dominate open agrarian landscapes.



Inland Woodland

These roads have minimal roadway directional signage. Utility poles run the full length of these roads. The location of new signage and utility poles must consider topographic variations along the edges of these roads as well as the dense woodland vegetation. The unique stands of mountain laurel and rhododendron along Ministerial Road need to be protected during construction.



Coastal

There are existing large highway directional signs along Route 1 in Charlestown. Utility lines run along the roadway edges in parts of the Paradise Loop. Additional vertical elements must be carefully located as they will be highly visible in these open landscapes.

APPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

Limited to essential directional and regulatory signs located to preserve scenic views. Co-locating signs or information is preferable.



Figure 3-5. Simplified sign in Westerly, RI.
Source: Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce Facebook page



Figure 3-6. A section of Ministerial Road in South Kingstown, RI having no signage or utility poles or lines. Source: Elena Pascarella



Figure 3-7. A view of Paradise Loop in Middletown, RI, that illustrates how scenic beauty is maintained without utility poles above ground. Source: Andrea Hansen, Newport This Week, August 2021



Figure 3-8. Appropriate design for signalized intersection, at intersection of Pawtucket Avenue and Pleasant Street, Rumford, RI. Source: Pam Sherrill

INAPPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS



Figure 3-9. A view of Route 1 with utility poles.
Source: Google Maps



Figure 3-10. A view of Route 1 with utility poles.
Source: Google Maps



Figure 3-11. Sign “salad” entering Westerly, RI from the 1970s. This has been simplified.
Source: Michael Summa

What to submit:

Information should be provided to the SRB that demonstrates how the proposed project will be consistent with the scenic character of the road and, if impacts are unavoidable, how they will be mitigated.

1. Photographs of the areas for the proposed signage, utility poles, or traffic signalization.
2. Cut sheets of utility poles and traffic signalization.
3. A site plan and other materials that document that the installation does not require extensive removal or alteration of trees or other natural features visible to the roadway user.

If adverse effects to the visual character cannot be avoided, the following should be provided:

1. Proposed mitigation measures.
2. Documentation that alternatives are not technically feasible, cost prohibitive, or less desirable from a visual quality standpoint.
3. The SRB may stipulate additional mitigation measures to protect visual character.

Guardrails and Associated Safety Systems

Along any scenic roadway, guardrails should blend aesthetically into the surrounding roadway environment so that they do not present an incongruous element in the landscape and detract from the roadway's scenic character.

Regulations and other Guidance

Guardrails and end caps along any state highway or roadway must meet FHWA and the [Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware \(MASH\)](#) safety requirements. Both posted speed and design speed of the scenic roadway are considered in MASH safety requirements. Proposed mitigation measures, in addition to powder coating guardrails, may include a waiver of RIDOT or federal standards, reduction of speed limit and design speed, per [Title 290-RICR-50-00-1](#), section 1.6 C 6 b. The following types of guardrails meet FHWA safety standards and provide less visual impact than the standard steel guardrail.

Design speeds are generally 10 miles per hour greater than the posted speed in rural areas and 5 mph greater than the posted speed in urban areas.

- Steel box-beam guardrails present a smaller visual intrusion into the landscape compared to standard highway steel beam guardrails. They can be painted, and the paint may require maintenance every 5 years.
- Corten steel guardrails provide an acceptable aesthetic, but the steel tends to deteriorate after prolonged exposure to road salt, thus weakening the guardrails' crash safety. Although these guardrails have been used on scenic roads in the past, Corten steel guardrails are no longer used.
- Traditional steel guardrails with powder coating or painted finish are visually acceptable for scenic roadways. A brown finish has been used in some locations.
- Cable guardrails meet the FHWA and MASH requirements and are listed in the [RIDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction \(as amended\)](#). However, these cable guardrails require sufficient median width to meet MASH crash requirements which limit where they can be utilized. Examples can be seen on Route 1 in Charlestown and South Kingstown. Refer to [RIDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction \(as amended\)](#) Section 902 for specifications on this guardrail.

Guardrails are not required along every section of roadway. FHWA and MUTCD guidelines require guardrails along road edges that have a steep drop-off from the road edge, and they provide safety along roads to prevent cross-traffic crashes. Guardrails, when present, are located outside of the clear zone, which is described in AASHTO Roadside Design Guide, as amended, and based on vehicle speed, volume, and roadside geometry. Crash worthy end caps may also be required based on the roadway's design speed.

Context Considerations for Guardrails and Associated Safety Systems on Scenic Roadways



Urban/Town Center

Urban and Town Center roadways such as Hope Street (Route 114) and Ferry Road and High Street in Bristol have relatively low design speeds, usually under 30 miles per hour (mph). In addition, location in a historic district allows the Rhode Island State Traffic Commission to reduce the posted speed limit to a “reasonable and safe” value. Guardrails are not used in this context unless the road has a bridge that crosses over a stream or highway where a bridge rail would be required. Where a bridge rail is necessary, a specially designed railing meeting the character of the area is recommended. Bridge railings will need to comply with RIDOT Standard Specifications and FHWA safety standards.

In 2024 RIDOT began replacing steel backed wooden guardrails on Veterans Memorial Parkway with brown powder-coated steel guardrails because the steel back wooden guardrails no longer meet MASH requirements at the design speed of the Parkway.



Agrarian

Steel cable guardrails already exist along sections of Breakneck Hill Road and Shannock Road. These are visually appropriate because the openness of the cables has less impact on the view areas.



Inland Woodland

Ministerial Road and sections of Ten Rod Road lie within inland areas characterized by surrounding woodland. These roadways have topographical variations that require guardrails in several locations. Sections of Ministerial Road have W-beam Corten steel guardrails that are in poor condition due to the deterioration of the Corten steel.



Coastal

Coastal scenic roadways include the Paradise Loop, and sections of Route 1 in Charlestown and South Kingstown. Steel guardrail material along coastal routes may be subject to more rapid wear from coastal salt spray and storms. Some of these have been replaced with powder-coated steel guardrails. Steel cable guardrail or box beam guardrail may also be appropriate for the context of these roadways, depending on the specific section of the road.

APPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

Box beam guardrails come in single-rail or multiple-rail styles. Note however that the single rail style is considered to have a weak post with post spaces at 6-foot on center. The multi-rail guardrail meets MASH requirements.



Figure 3-12. Multi-rail on Great Road in Lincoln, RI. Source: RIDOT

Highway guardrails comprised of steel posts and steel cables can meet FHWA and MASH safety requirements if there is sufficient distance from the guardrail to the edge of the roadway. Examples of this guardrail are currently found along scenic roadway Route 1 in South Kingstown and Charlestown.



Figure 3-13. Steel cable guardrail along Route 1 in Charlestown, RI. Source: Elena Pascarella

Traditional steel guardrails with powder coating or painted finish are visually acceptable for scenic roadways. This image shows a steel guardrail in a scenic roadway with powder coating to address aesthetic concerns. They also meet MASH test and FHWA safety standards and are specified in [RIDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction \(as amended\)](#).



Figure 3-14 Appropriate: powder coated guardrail and end cap treatment on Veterans Memorial Parkway in East Providence, RI. Source: Pam Sherrill

INAPPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

The following is an example of a steel guardrail that does not enhance the character of this scenic roadway.



Figure 3-15. Standard guardrail along scenic roadway Route 102 in Exeter, RI. The guardrail contrasts sharply with the historic Lawton Mill building. *Source: Elena Pascarella*

What to submit:

Information should be provided to the SRB that demonstrates how the proposed project will be consistent with the scenic character of the road and, if impacts are unavoidable, how they will be mitigated.

1. A site plan that identifies the locations of the proposed guardrail.
2. Photographs of areas for the proposed guardrail.
3. Image of proposed guardrail style and color of paint if applicable.
4. A specification and detailed drawing of the style of proposed guardrail. Detailed drawings should note compliance of the guardrail with RIDOT and FHWA/MASH requirements.

If adverse effects on the visual character cannot be avoided, the following should be provided:

1. Proposed mitigation measures. Mitigation measures may include powder coated steel or other treatments to reduce adverse visual effects.
2. Proposed mitigation measures may include a waiver of RIDOT or federal standards, per [Title 290-RICR-50-00-1](#).
3. Documentation that alternatives are not technically feasible, cost prohibitive, or less desirable from a visual quality standpoint.
4. The SRB may stipulate additional mitigation measures to protect the visual character of guardrail on the roadway.

Stone Walls, Ornamental Fencing and Sidewalks

Stone walls, other granite features such as granite bounds and hitching posts, and ornamental fencing, are integral visual components of the landscape. Many of Rhode Island's scenic roadways contain stone walls along the right-of-way (ROW) or within the scenic viewshed. If impacts on stone walls cannot be avoided, considerations for repairing and maintaining these walls should follow Rhode Island DOT Standard Specifications and consider the unique historic character of each stone wall. Sidewalk construction depends upon the specific roadway. Sidewalks are viewed as incompatible with the rural character along the more rural Scenic Roadways but are important features of others.

Regulations and Other Guidance

Details and construction should comply with Section 912 of Part 900 of the [RIDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction \(as amended\)](#).

The following specifications are required for work on stone walls along Scenic Roadways:

1. Stone walls should be listed as an item in the construction contract, with the direction to be rebuilt "in kind," with careful duplication of blending of existing stones and additional stones, and duplication of special features of the original wall, such as lintels, gate posts, openings, copings, markers, etc.
2. Specifications reflecting the types of walls will be included in the bid documents along with proper notations on the construction plans. While the preference is to reconstruct the stone wall following local folk craft and dry-stone traditions, the use of construction equipment is acceptable when determined necessary. In some cases, it may be necessary to use other stone from within the right-of-way or other local sources, especially if the original stone has been removed or lost.
3. The construction plan shall indicate the wall offset from the right-of-way line. The newly reconstructed stone walls may be set at or beyond a new right-of-way line, for example, due to prohibitive physical conditions or safety concerns.
4. Before relocation, the ground surface needs to be prepared by removing brush, vegetation, topsoil, and any unsuitable material accumulations. Then the area can be rough graded to create a reasonably firm and level surface.
5. Stone wall repair or reconstruction shall use stone indigenous to the area. Despite Rhode Island being a small state in square miles, the quality, size, and color of stone vary greatly throughout the state. Any stones removed for reconstruction shall be reused on site. No stones shall be removed from the property.
6. The [Highway Design Manual Division 9](#) addresses pedestrian and bicycle accommodation and [290-RICR-30-00-2](#) addresses ADA Accessibility.

7. Sidewalk replacement or repair may be required in kind and may be subject to similar requirements if located within an historic district.
8. Sidewalk extension in areas with limited pedestrian use may be considered with permeable pavement to reduce stormwater management issues.

Context Considerations for Stone Walls, Ornamental Fencing and Sidewalks on Scenic Roadways

Sections of all roadway types may have stone walls or ornamental fencing along their perimeter. Many of these walls and other stone features were originally located along the roadway right-of-way, to define the roadway boundary. Walls in the western and southern parts of Rhode Island tend to have rounder and larger natural stones than in eastern Rhode Island. This is the result of glacial outwash and the fact that areas south of Route 1 were the end of the glacial moraine. Replacement or additional stone walls should match the existing stone wall in materials and construction methods.

On rural scenic roads sidewalks are either absent or actively identified as incompatible with scenic roadway character. The Paradise Loop Stewardship plan explicitly calls out subdivision sidewalk requirements as a threat to rural character and recommends that those standards be reexamined. The Ministerial Road and Ten Rod Road plans acknowledge the pedestrian safety problem but favor shoulder widening over formal sidewalk construction. The Shannock Road plan references sidewalks only as part of a 1990s RIDOT improvement plan that was never built. The two Route 1 plans and Veterans Memorial Parkway do not address sidewalks at all, reflecting the higher-speed, automobile-oriented nature of those corridors although the East Bay Bike Path provides pedestrian access along a segment of the parkway. The Hope Street and Ferry Road (Route 114) and High Street and Great Road/Breakneck Hill Road plans give substantive attention to sidewalks. The Hope Street and Ferry Road (Route 114) and High Street plan is notably more detailed on sidewalk conditions because the corridor passes through a walkable historic downtown where pedestrian activity is a central part of the scenic and visitor experience, whereas the Great Road/Breakneck Hill Road plan treats pedestrian infrastructure primarily as a safety concern on a fast-moving rural commuter road.



Urban/Town Center

Urban and Town Center roadways such as Hope Street and Ferry Road (Route 114) and High Street in Bristol have narrow streets with design speeds usually under 30 mph. The roadways in these areas are usually curbed, have sidewalks, on-street parking, and are within the context of historic districts. Occasionally one finds stone walls or ornamental fencing along those sections of Hope Street and Ferry Road (Route 114) and High Street in Bristol outside of the historic Town Center. Veterans Memorial Parkway is a historic designated road as it was designed by the Olmsted

Brothers' landscape architecture firm. Some sections of each of these scenic roadways have stone walls.



Agrarian

Rural agrarian roadways such as Great Road/Breakneck Hill Road in Lincoln Shannock Road in Charlestown/Richmond, and sections of Route 1 in South Kingstown and Charlestown provide long-distance views along the roadway route. Sections of these roadways have stone walls and granite bounds along their perimeter edges. Many of these walls are on private property.



Inland Woodland

Ministerial Road, South Kingstown, and sections of Ten Rod Road lie within inland areas that are characterized by surrounding woodland dotted with stone walls. Many of these walls are on private property and outside of the public right of way.



Coastal

Coastal scenic roadways include the Paradise Loop in Middletown, Veterans Memorial Parkway in East Providence, and sections of Route 1 in Charlestown and South Kingstown. Some sections of each of these scenic roadways have stone walls.

APPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

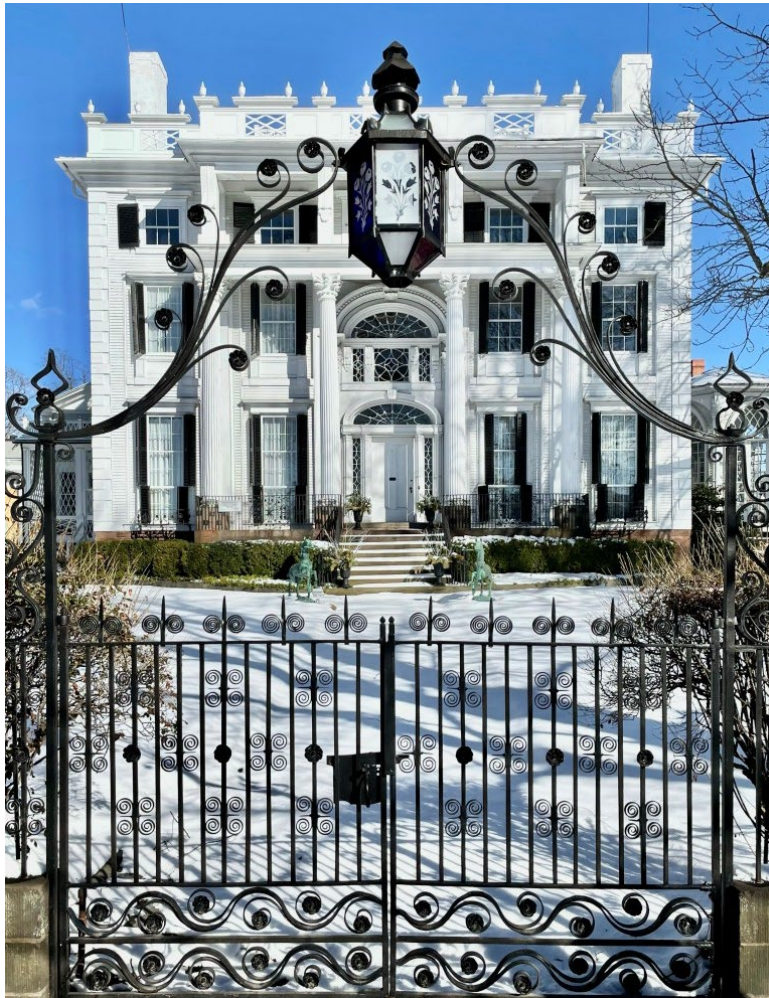


Figure 3-16. Hope Street historic fence, Bristol, RI. *Source: buildingsofnewengland.com*



Figure 3-17. Stone wall along Paradise Road, Middletown, RI. *Source: Elena Pascarella*



Figure 3-18. Stone walls in South County, RI. *Source: Elena Pascarella*



Figure 3-19. Stone walls in Exeter, RI. *Source: Elena Pascarella*

INAPPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

Inappropriate stone wall treatments do not blend in with or mirror the design character of the surrounding landscape. Newer segmental retaining walls may not be appropriate or blend in with the traditional walls found throughout Rhode Island.



Figure 3-20. Example of new segmental retaining walls. *Source: Keystone Stonegate*

What to submit:

Information should be provided to the SRB that demonstrates how the proposed project will be consistent with the scenic character of the road and, if impacts are unavoidable, how they will be mitigated.

1. A site plan that identifies the locations of the existing stone walls, ornamental fencing, other historic elements or sidewalks, outlining any proposed modifications, or relocation.
2. Photographs of existing elements and location of where new elements are proposed.
3. Image and details of proposed modifications.
4. Details and construction should comply with Section 912 of Part 900 of the [*RIDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction*](#), latest edition February 2024.

If adverse effects on the visual character cannot be avoided, the following should be provided:

1. Proposed mitigation measures. Mitigation measures may include directional drilling for utility installation under stone walls or ornamental fencing.
2. Documentation that alternatives are not technically feasible, cost prohibitive, or less desirable from a visual quality standpoint.
3. The SRB may stipulate additional mitigation measures to protect the visual character of the roadway.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater management along roadways in Rhode Island comes under the jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM). The RIDOT website provides the background on stormwater management.

“In Rhode Island, the R.I. Department of Environmental Management is the delegated authority to implement the [National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System](#) (NPDES) program through a similarly named program called RIPDES ([Rhode Island Pollutant Discharge Elimination System](#)). These programs require us to obtain permits and establish a stormwater management program aimed at reducing pollutants that enter drains and storm sewer systems. The Federal government considers our network of drainage structures as a system, and therefore we are regulated as an MS4 (shorthand in the regulatory world for “municipal separate storm sewer system”) and must comply with all permitting regulations.”

Both NPDES and RIPDES require the identification of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for stormwater control measures for a project to comply with all stormwater regulations.

Regulations and Guidance

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation provides detailed guidelines regarding stormwater management and control along roadways and highways (RIDOT, 2024). In 2019 RIDOT prepared a stormwater control plan that included a set of templates and guidelines. The plans are watershed-based and are a requirement of a Consent Decree. These guidelines and templates include the following:

- A key document in the 2019 materials on guidance for stormwater management is the [RI Department of Transportation Linear Stormwater Manual](#). This manual outlines the approaches termed “pre-treatment” in that they help to reduce runoff velocity and utilize vegetation to filter coarse sediments and debris from the runoff. For example, a pretreatment swale can provide both conveyance and pretreatment for a downstream stormwater unit (STU).
- Another key document that RIDOT published is the manual entitled [Road Stream Crossing Assessment Handbook](#).
- The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) [Stormwater Design and Installation Rules](#) also provide guidance on requirements and permits for both public and private projects.

Porous pavements and infiltration gutters with subsurface changes provide a means for management of stormwater with minimal visual impacts on the roadway. They can provide a means of managing stormwater at the time of rain impact. Porous pavement catches precipitation and surface runoff, storing it in a subsurface reservoir of crushed stone layers,

and slowly allowing the water to infiltrate into the soil below or discharge via a drain tile. The crushed stone layers filter out dirt, sand, oils, and other pollutants and allow the “cleaned” water to percolate into the ground where it can naturally replenish the groundwater reserves.

Context Considerations for Stormwater Management on Scenic Roadways

For all Scenic Roadways, future maintenance, including tree and root pruning, must be considered. Stormwater infrastructure should consider potential impacts on pedestrian access.



Urban/Town Center

In urban areas, such as Hope Street, where the road is typically curbed, stormwater is collected via catch basins and drain inlets which connect to underground storm sewers and, in some cases, to combined sewer outflow pipes. Design of stormwater management should respect the historic character of the roadway and be compatible with the landscape design character. Stormwater management elements should be screened with appropriate landscaping.



Agrarian

Rural agrarian roadways such as Breakneck Hill Road, Shannock Road, Charlestown/Richmond, and sections of Route 1 in South Kingstown and Charlestown rely largely on drainage swales along the road edges.



Inland Woodland

Ministerial Road, South Kingstown, and sections of Ten Rod Road have topographical variations and tree canopy coverage that can affect stormwater management. The varied topography may cause roadway flooding at low points. The tree canopy and woodland vegetation cover help to absorb stormwater at its point of impact with the ground. However, flooding can occur during periods of extreme rainfall in areas with high water tables or conditions with frozen ground.



Coastal

Coastal scenic roadways have topographical variations and tree canopy coverage that affect stormwater management. Low-lying areas may be more prone to flooding.

APPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

The [RI Department of Transportation Linear Stormwater Manual](#) provides standards for managing stormwater that minimize visual and ecological impacts. Underground infiltration systems can avoid visual impacts but may not be appropriate for all locations. Surface level stormwater treatments such as rain gardens, grassy bio-retention swales and landscaped filter strips are appropriate stormwater treatments for these roads.

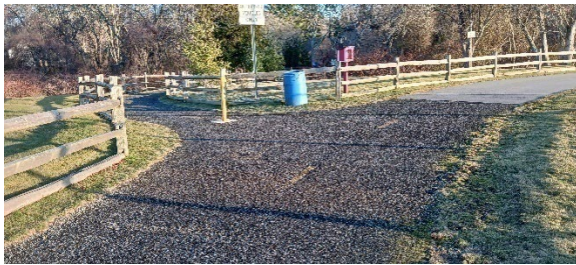


Figure 3-21. Porous pavement, Narragansett.
Source: Michael De Luca



Figure 3-23 Appropriate for stormwater management. Berm along Veterans Memorial Parkway. Source: Pam Sherrill



Figure 3-22 Appropriate for stormwater management. Drainage swale along Veterans Memorial Parkway and East Bay Bike Path. Source: Pam Sherrill

INAPPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

Surface level treatments that require fencing.

What to submit:

Information should be provided to the SRB that demonstrates how the proposed project will be consistent with the scenic character of the road and would not adversely affect pedestrian access.

1. Conceptual plans of the proposed stormwater management approach prior to submission for the required RIDEM permits – RIPDES and NPDES – that includes existing conditions topography and vegetation within 20 feet of the proposed work.
2. A landscaping plan prepared by a Landscape Architect registered in Rhode Island that contains specifications and details.
3. A plan for tree and root maintenance.
4. A site plan that identifies the locations of the proposed stormwater management techniques and detailed drawings as required under the permit applications.
5. Photographs of the areas for the proposed work.
6. Demonstrate how stormwater management features will not adversely affect scenic characteristics

If adverse effects to the visual character cannot be avoided, the following should be provided:

1. Proposed mitigation measures.
2. Documentation that alternatives are not technically feasible, cost prohibitive, or less desirable from a visual quality standpoint.
3. The SRB may stipulate additional mitigation measures to protect the visual character of the roadway.

Landscaping and Vegetation

Vegetation along scenic roadway corridors may be naturally occurring or deliberately planted to enhance the character of the landscape. Effective vegetation management plays a vital role in preserving the visual quality of the roadway. It can involve opening views to highlight significant features, strategically blocking visibility to protect sensitive areas, and controlling invasive species that threaten the roadway's ecological and visual integrity. It is important that the landscape remains both beautiful and resilient.

Guidance

The Board expects applicants to employ the following to preserve, protect and enhance plant life.

1. Utilize the services of an arborist licensed in Rhode Island to evaluate mature trees for protection and preservation.
2. Include a landscape architect registered in Rhode Island on the design team. Design work for drawings, plans, specifications, reports and other contract documents must be performed by a RI registered landscape architect. Plans and/or other documents shall be stamped and signed by the RI registered landscape architect in responsible charge of the work.
3. No construction laydown areas, stockpiling of materials or vehicles may be located or traverse within the dripline of the tree canopy.
4. Protect existing vegetation during construction with trunk and/or drip-line tree protection devices.
5. Remove invasive species, when practicable.
6. Use native species and indigenous material, when appropriate.
7. Consider future maintenance practices when proposing plants. Trees and shrubs should not require any special treatments such as pruning or cutting back. Any plant beds in grassed areas must be large and mower friendly.
8. Conduct a soil test to determine nutrient levels and soil pH. Refer to this when choosing plant species and suggesting soil amendments or fertilizers.
9. Include a 24-month establishment and guarantee on proposed plant material.
10. During construction, root and limb pruning of trees shall be performed by or under the supervision of a RI licensed arborist.

Context Considerations for Landscaping and Vegetation on Scenic Roadways

Tree canopy is a vital component of the scenic character along Hope Street, Veterans Parkway, the Paradise Loop, and Ministerial Road. Preservation of this canopy is critical. Protection of the roots and canopy during construction is critical for all work proposed along these roadways.



Urban/Town Center

Plantings within the urban center are usually limited to street trees. Communities may have tree wardens as well as lists of tree species that are acceptable for planting within urban areas. Proposals to install trees along or adjacent to sidewalks should consider how mature tree roots and canopy may impact the sidewalks and utilities. Consider resilient species that can reduce runoff and pollution. Tree filter design solutions such as suspended pavement systems prevent tree roots from getting compacted or systems that provide an open box design allowing water and air to circulate around tree roots and allow them to grow freely without impacting sidewalks.

Veterans Memorial Parkway was designed by the Olmsted Brothers' landscape architecture firm. Any changes to vegetation that alter the historic character of the roadway should be avoided and the original Olmsted plan should be consulted for guidance.



Agrarian

Rural agrarian roadways have natural open areas as well as woodland areas. Preservation of existing landscape character is important in maintaining view corridors. Wildflower mix may be suitable for use within the ROW. These roadways generally have gravel shoulders along the roadway edges.



Inland Woodland

These roadways have topographical variations and dense tree canopy coverage that contribute to the scenic visual character. Prolific plant groupings of rhododendron and mountain laurel are a defining characteristic of Ministerial Road's scenic character. Wildflower mix may be suitable for use within the ROW.



Coastal

Coastal scenic roadways have varied vegetation coverage with open areas and areas of dense tree canopy coverage. The roadway edges in these areas include gravel shoulders, landscaping with natural vegetation, shoulders with guardrails, stone rip-rapped slopes, and curbed edges.

APPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

Ministerial Road in South Kingstown runs through a densely vegetated woodland of native oaks, hickory, and conifer trees. The defining scenic characteristic of this road is the dense stands of mountain laurel understory shrubs that present an amazing display when in bloom in early summer.



Figure 3-24. Winter views along Ministerial Road, South Kingstown, RI. *Source: RIDOT*



Figure 3-25. Route 1, Charlestown and South Kingstown, RI. *Source: RIDOT*

Route 1 in South Kingstown and Charlestown has an open grassy median between the east and westbound routes and the vegetation along the perimeter varies between woodland and open agrarian fields.

Street trees are important visual components of urban streetscapes, such as Hope Street.



Figure 3-26. Street trees on Hope Street in Bristol, RI. *Source: Elena Pascarella*

INAPPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

The mature height of landscaping should not impact existing scenic views. Plantings that block views at intersections or roadways accessing the scenic road, and plantings that present a roadway hazard should be avoided.

Invasive species should be avoided, as well as species that are susceptible to the following pests and insects: Asian Longhorn Beetle, Emerald Ash Borer, Spotted Lantern Fly, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Lymantria Dispar, and Bagworm. Also avoid species that are susceptible to the following diseases: Anthracnose is found in deciduous trees such as Sycamore, Dogwood, Linden, Maple, and Oak; Apple Scab; Black Knot Canker; Cedar-Apple Rust; Diplodia Tip Blight; Dutch Elm Disease; Phytophthora Root Rot; and Powdery Mildew.



Figure 3-28. Tree damage from the Asian Longhorn Beetle. *Source: Tree Link News*



Figure 3-27. Hope Street in Bristol, RI sidewalk damage from tree roots. *Source: Town of Bristol*

Street trees in urban settings must have sufficient soil depth for root growth and tree sustainability, that will not impact sidewalks or utility lines. Municipalities may have a list of street trees.

Any material that does not protect, preserve, and help to manage the scenic character of the roadway is not appropriate for an edge treatment. Elements that may contribute to this are drainage problems or pavement edge markings in poor condition.

What to submit:

Information should be provided to the SRB that demonstrates how the proposed landscaping will be consistent with the scenic character of the road.

1. Plan set that addresses items 1-10 on [Page 50](#).
2. A site plan that identifies any vegetation that is proposed to be removed.
3. Photographs of the areas where vegetation is proposed to be removed.
4. Landscaping plan with specifications and details to protect tree and root systems during installation, that is stamped and signed by a landscape architect registered in Rhode Island.
5. Specifications for tree and root installation and maintenance standards. Include reference to work performed by or under the supervision of a Rhode Island licensed Arborist.
6. Photographs of the areas for the proposed plantings
7. Specifications as needed.

If adverse effects to the visual character cannot be avoided, the following should be provided:

1. Proposed mitigation measures.
2. Documentation that alternatives are not technically feasible, cost prohibitive, or less desirable from a visual quality standpoint.
3. The SRB may stipulate additional mitigation measures to protect the visual character of the roadway.

Access Management

The U.S. Department of Transportation defines Access Management as follows:

“Access management is a set of techniques that state and local governments can use to control access to highways, major arterials, and other roadways. Access management includes several techniques that are designed to increase the capacity of these roads, manage congestion, and reduce crashes.”

[*\(FHWA Benefit of Access Management Brochure\)*](#)

Data on vehicle crashes generally indicates that the frequency of access points, such as driveways or side streets, can result in a potential increase in the crash rate along a roadway. The Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Highway Administration have both published numerous studies on crash rates as a function of access point density. The FHWA report found a “strong linear relationship between the number of crashes and the number of driveways.” [*\(FHWA Benefits of Access Management Brochure\)*](#).

In addition to safety concerns, access points such as driveways and intersections can present visual impacts on scenic roadways as these elements may interject features that can interrupt continuous scenic views along a road corridor. The radius of proposed driveways should be minimized to the extent feasible to minimize disruption.

Regulations and Guidance

The U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration has published a document titled Benefits of Access Management which provides an overview of techniques for access management and provides a list of other resources.

Context Considerations for Access Management for Scenic Roadways

Applicants should demonstrate consideration of:

- Shared access between parcels, and the consolidation of existing driveways to reduce the number of accesses.
- Master planning for larger properties with plans for future access and internal roads as part of the plan.
- Limit curb cuts to one per lot.



Urban/Town Center

Sections of Hope Street in Bristol are more heavily developed than other scenic roadways. Access management is critical in maintaining the scenic character of these roadways and maintaining roadway safety. Access alongside streets should be considered where feasible.



Agrarian

Rural agrarian roadways such as Breakneck Hill Road and Shannock Road have sections where view distances are impeded by curves or topography. The introduction of new access points must be carefully considered so as not to impede safety and not impact visual quality in these rural roadways.



Inland Woodland

Ministerial Road, South Kingstown, and sections of Ten Rod Road, Exeter lie within inland areas that are characterized by surrounding woodlands as well as topographic changes. The introduction of new access points must be carefully considered so as not to impede safety and not impact visual quality in these rural roadways.



Coastal Roadways

Coastal scenic roadways include the Paradise Loop, Middletown, Veterans Memorial Parkway, East Providence, and sections of Route 1 in Charlestown and South Kingstown. The unique coastal views of these roadways can be adversely impacted by new development, and access must be carefully managed to protect scenic values.

What to submit:

The applicant should provide the following to demonstrate how the proposed work would not impact the roadway's visual character.

1. Photographs of the areas for the proposed work.
2. A site plan that identifies the locations of the proposed access point.
3. Documentation of efforts to remove, combine, or reduce size of proposed curb cuts.

APPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

Use access management to plan for more cohesive and efficient access so that safety and road capacity – as well as scenic road character – are preserved. If the property has access to a secondary roadway other than the scenic roadway, consider using the secondary roadway for access and egress. Fewer driveways, apart from allowing for more orderly traffic, increase traffic safety and help to preserve roadway and community character.

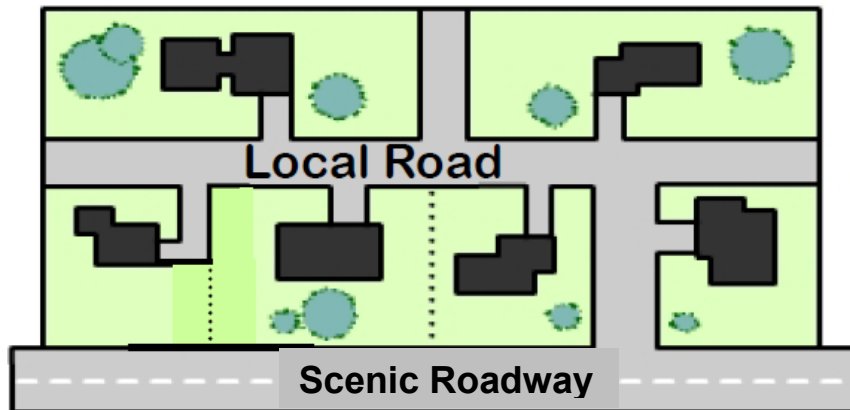


Figure 3-29. Combined curb cuts. *Source: Wisconsin DOT*

INAPPROPRIATE FOR SCENIC ROADS

Excessive access points decrease traffic safety and dilute the scenic character of the area.

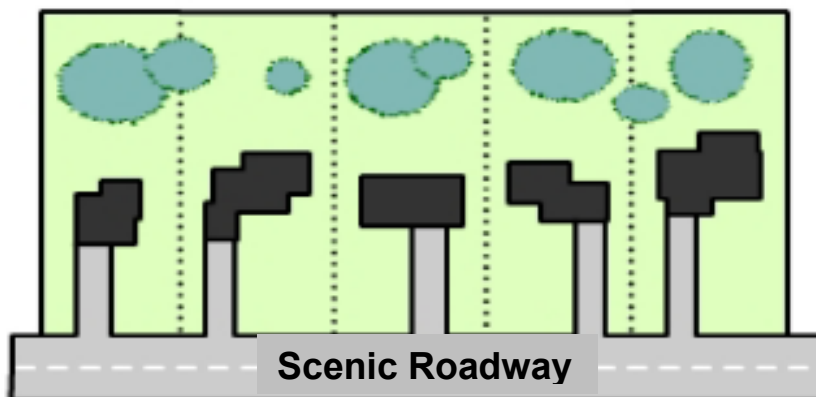


Figure 3-30. Multiple curb cuts. *Source: Wisconsin DOT*